

# CSP: Step by Step

Oregon Natural Resources Conservation Service



*You've been  
taking care  
of natural  
resources  
on your  
land for  
years...  
...now,  
you have a  
chance to be  
financially  
rewarded  
for your  
work.*

## **You are interested in applying for the Conservation Security Program (CSP). Now what?**

CSP is designed to reward farmers and ranchers who have achieved the highest levels of conservation on their land. To apply for CSP, you will need to complete a number of steps to establish that you meet basic eligibility criteria and that your operation meets a high standard of land stewardship. Individuals who have an existing resource management system (RMS) level plan with the Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) may have already completed a number of these steps.

### **Step 1: Prepare for CSP**

Before you begin the application process, plan to attend informational meetings to learn whether CSP is right for you and your land. These meetings will outline the benefits and requirements of the program. You should also review CSP self-screening materials to help you determine whether you may be eligible.

If you decide to apply, you will need a USDA Identification Number (also called a SCIMS identification). Those who have worked with USDA farm programs in the past most likely have a SCIMS identification already. If you do not, the process is simple; just contact your local Farm Service Agency (FSA) office. FSA is listed in the phone book under 'Federal Government,' Farm Service Agency and can be found on the Web at [www.fsa.usda.gov/or/](http://www.fsa.usda.gov/or/).

After attending an informational meeting and determining that you may be eligible, you should plan to attend self-assessment workshops held by NRCS to help you complete the next steps in the application process.

### **Step 2: Define Your Operation**

CSP rewards farmers and ranchers for the stewardship investments they have made on working lands. For the purpose of applying for CSP, you might define your working lands as a single agricultural operation or as multiple operations.

Keep in mind that your CSP application is limited to one agricultural operation. You may submit only one application per sign-up. Once you are enrolled in CSP, you cannot add additional land to the contract. Producers with an active CSP contract may not submit an application for another operation in future sign-ups.

### **Step 3: Complete the Self-Assessment Workbook**

A self-assessment is required to apply for CSP. The self-assessment workbook walks you through a series of questions to help you determine your basic eligibility and record the level of conservation on your land. Self-assessment workbooks are available online at [www.or.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov) (select Conservation Security Program) or at your local NRCS office.





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#### **Step 4: Gather Records & Documentation**

To participate in CSP, you will be asked to provide documentation of the conservation activities discussed in the self-assessment. For example, if you have rangeland, you are required to provide grazing records. Oregon NRCS has developed a 'Conservation Records' publication you can use in gathering and organizing your documentation. You can find this publication on the web at [www.or.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov) (select Conservation Security Program). Limited copies of the 'Conservation Records' publication will also be available at workshops and at your local NRCS office.

#### **Step 5: Determine the Right CSP Tier & Category for You**

When you decide which CSP Tier to apply for, you will consider the level of conservation in place on your land, additional measures you plan to implement, and whether you want to enroll all or a portion of your operation. Within the Tier, you will also be placed in a Category based on soil quality, water quality, and wildlife habitat on your operation. Information and worksheets will be available at workshops to help you with this step.

#### **Step 6: Meet with NRCS**

Once sign-up begins and you have completed the above steps, make an appointment with your local NRCS office. You will need to bring both your self-assessment and the required documentation. During the interview, NRCS will review your self-assessment and documentation and help you identify future conservation work you would like to complete on your land.

Based on this information, your local NRCS staff will then work with you to confirm that you have selected the Tier and Category that best describe your operation. They will then help you finalize your CSP Conservation Stewardship Plan and CSP application.

#### **Step 7: Submit Your Application**

Your information will be transmitted to the NRCS National Headquarters, where funding selections will be made. All applications in Category A will be funded first, followed by categories B, C, etc., until this year's funds for the program are depleted. You will be notified by mail once selections are made.

#### **Enrollment in CSP: Your CSP Contract**

If you are selected for enrollment in CSP, your local NRCS office will contact you to finalize and sign your contract.

Your CSP contract will run from 5 to 10 years, depending on the Tier you enroll at. During that time, you will maintain the level of stewardship you identified in your self-assessment and implement any new practices identified in your contract.

**For more information,  
check out**

[www.or.nrcs.usda.gov](http://www.or.nrcs.usda.gov)

**...or contact your local  
NRCS field office**

Eugene - 541-465-6443

Klamath Falls - 541-883-6924

La Grande - 541-963-4178

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